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EXECUTIVE BOARD

Winter organizational session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 5 February 1991, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Ms. PALME (Sweden)

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This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent to Mrs. M. A. Rebadavia, Office of the Secretary of the UNICEF Executive Board, room H-12K, UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE 1991 REGULAR SESSION:

(b) PROVISIONAL ANNOTATED AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK FOR THE EXECUTIVE BOARD SESSION TO BE HELD FROM 22 APRIL TO 3 MAY 1991 (continued) (E/ICEF/1991/1)

1. Mr. SCOULAR (United Kingdom) said that in recent years, the Executive Board's difficulties in considering an increasingly extensive agenda had necessitated the holding of parallel meetings. His delegation was concerned that the sessions might have to be extended. He therefore proposed that parallel meetings of the Programme Committee and of the Committee on Administration and Finance should be held on 25 April (two meetings), 26 April (three meetings) and 29 April (two meetings). The drafting sessions should also be rescheduled and should perhaps begin on Monday, 29 April. All of the scheduled meetings could thus be accommodated, while the remaining free day would offer an opportunity for further consideration of the Committee agendas and further consultations between delegations and their Governments.

2. Ms. EHRENREICH (Denmark) referred to the experience of the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), whose finance and programming committees had held parallel meetings, and proposed that the Executive Board of UNICEF should follow the same procedure.

3. Mr. FERNANDEZ (Liberia) said that his delegation had not found the holding of parallel meetings a good experience. The issues before the Executive Board were very important in both their programming and financial aspects, and small delegations were unable to participate in two meetings at the same time. Another solution must be found.

4. Miss DIEGUEZ (Mexico) said that the United Kingdom proposal was not new and had already been the subject of much debate. The vast majority of the developing countries that were members or observers of the Executive Board opposed the holding of parallel meetings. Moreover, it was very possible that many speakers would participate in the general debate, owing to the interest which the World Summit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child had awakened in issues regarding children. Her delegation was therefore concerned that it might not be possible to conclude the general debate on Tuesday, 23 April. Perhaps a night meeting could be added on that day so that the morning meeting of Wednesday, 24 April could be exclusively devoted to the Executive Director's response and immediately followed by the meetings of the Programme Committee.

5. Miss ZINDOGA (Zimbabwe) said that she supported the positions of the representatives of Liberia and Mexico on the United Kingdom proposal. She fully agreed with the Mexican representative's proposal regarding the general debate.

6. Ms. ASHTON (Bolivia) said that her delegation also found it very difficult to attend two meetings at the same time. Moreover, the general debate should not be allowed to detract from the importance of the work of the two Committees.

7. Mr. VILCHEZ ASHER (Nicaragua) said that he supported the statements of the delegations of Liberia, Mexico, Zimbabwe and Bolivia with regard to the holding of parallel meetings, and requested the Board to explore other possibilities.

8. Miss SEMAFUMU (Uganda) said she was concerned about the possibility that the drafting sessions of 29 and 30 April and 1 May would be held at the same time as the Committee meetings, and associated herself with the opinions of the representatives of Liberia, Mexico, Zimbabwe, Bolivia and Nicaragua regarding the United Kingdom proposal.

9. Mr. SPRINGER (Barbados) said that the holding of parallel meetings posed serious problems for small delegations. Developing countries were clearly placed at a disadvantage by such a procedure.

10. Miss LISSIDINI (Uruguay) said that she shared the opinions of the delegations of Liberia, Mexico and others with regard to the issue of parallel meetings.

11. Miss COURSON (France) said that she understood the position of the developing countries on the issue of parallel meetings. Considering that the drafting sessions represented the stage at which all the results of the debates held in the Committee meetings were set forth in writing, she felt that the drafting sessions should not be sacrificed for the benefit of the Committees. Only four drafting sessions had been scheduled, all of which were to be held at 6 p.m., when fewer members would be participating. That situation raised the possibility that previously adopted decisions would again be called into question. The officers of the Board should attach special importance to the question of the drafting sessions.

12. Mr. WILLIAMS (Secretary of the Executive Board) said that although the timetable indicated only four drafting sessions, the Board could, if necessary, decide to add up to five more in the course of the session. The Board would decide, as it had the previous year, whether the drafting sessions would be held at 6 p.m. or at the same time as the Committee meetings.

13. Mr. SCOULAR (United Kingdom) said that time constraints had already necessitated the holding of parallel meetings. He agreed that there would very probably be more speakers in the general debate and that none of the time set aside for the drafting sessions should be sacrificed. Those considerations made it all the more necessary to hold parallel meetings. Since the conclusions drawn in the meetings would be put before the Board for its final approval in plenary session, those countries whose representatives had not been present at the Committee meetings could take that opportunity to express their opinions.

14. Mr. MAJOOR (Netherlands) recalled that in its decision 1991/1, the Executive Board had agreed to schedule a sufficient number of drafting sessions to allow for full discussion of all draft proposals that did not enjoy consensus and, at the same time and to the extent possible, to avoid night meetings. For that reason, drafting sessions would have to be held at the same time as Committee meetings. That decision had indicated a clear preference for holding drafting sessions in parallel with other meetings during the day, unless the arrangement posed serious problems.

15. Ms. EHRENREICH (Denmark) said that it was necessary to try to avoid night meetings. Given that there must not be many delegations with only one representative on the Executive Board, the holding of some parallel meetings should not cause too many difficulties.

16. Ms. MEHTA (India) endorsed the remarks made by the delegation of Mexico and others concerning the United Kingdom proposal. No agreement had been reached in Executive Board decision 1990/1 concerning the holding of parallel meetings of the two Committees. Such a procedure caused difficulties for the delegations of the developing countries, even if they had more than one member.

17. Mr. MAJOOR (Netherlands) agreed with the representative of India that there had been general agreement not to hold more than two meetings in parallel. His delegation also preferred the two Committees not to meet at the same time, as stated in paragraph 1 (b) of the decision. Nevertheless, that same paragraph did indicate a preference for drafting sessions to be scheduled in parallel with meetings of the Committees. The holding of night meetings should be the exception and not the rule.

18. Mr. MANSARAY (Sierra Leone) said that his delegation was opposed to the holding of parallel meetings, since effective conduct of the work required the presence of all delegations at all meetings.

19. The CHAIRMAN said that she would transmit the views expressed in the debate to the Bureau.

(c) THEMES OF INFORMAL MEETINGS

20. Mr. CANTINI (Italy) said that his delegation attached great importance to UNICEF emergency operations, particularly in the light of recent events, and suggested that the question should be included in the list of themes for informal meetings. One meeting could be devoted to consideration of the question if, for example, themes 2 and 3 on the provisional list were dealt with together.

21. Ms. EHRENREICH (Denmark) suggested as possible themes for informal meetings the role of UNICEF in the field of family planning and the sustainability of UNICEF programmes. A third theme which had already been considered the year before, that of external relations, merited further consideration given the great interest it had for members of the National Committees which attended the Executive Board session.

22. Mr. MacARTHUR (United States of America) said that his delegation agreed with the provisional list of themes for informal meetings and proposed the following additional themes: children in difficult circumstances, the question of hunger - which was related to emergency operations, external relations, urbanization and UNICEF programmes, cooperation between UNICEF and WHO, and UNICEF programmes against AIDS. One way of dealing with all the themes in the short time available would be to combine some of them so that they could be considered at a single meeting. Another possibility would be, once the complete list of themes was available, for each delegation to indicate its priorities to the Bureau, and, on that basis, for nine themes to be selected, the rest being deleted.

23. Ms. ROEDSMOEN (Observer for Norway) proposed the themes of population policy and family planning and AIDS, with special attention to the long-term effects of the disease. With regard to the question of documentation, she stressed the need to reduce the number of documents, as well as their length, so that a total of not more than 1,000 pages was submitted to an Executive Board session.

24. Miss DIEGUEZ (Mexico) emphasized the importance of the theme of children in especially difficult circumstances, which would include the questions of street children, refugee children and migrant children. So as to accommodate the new themes proposed by delegations, themes two and three could be combined, while theme one, relating to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which in any event was to be debated by the Executive Board, could be replaced by another.

25. Mrs. ASHTON (Bolivia) supported the proposal to consider the theme of children in difficult circumstances, one of the salient aspects of which was street children who were victims of drug trafficking. It would be possible to combine the theme of cooperation between UNICEF and WHO with that of activities against AIDS.

26. Mr. MAJOOR (Netherlands) said that the debate underlined the trend towards a greater number of informal meetings, which offered a good opportunity to exchange information. The interest of the themes which had been suggested, particularly those relating to urbanization and UNICEF programmes, AIDS, family planning and emergency operations, made it difficult to decide which should be considered and which could be omitted. One possibility which had already been raised was that of combining some questions, such as themes 2 and 3 on the provisional list, cooperation between UNICEF and WHO and the problem of AIDS or the question of children in difficult circumstances and urbanization. Another solution would be to hold some informal meetings during the week prior to the Executive Board session, which would enable most of the proposed themes to be considered.

27. Mr. OKSAMITNIY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation could agree to the grouping of some questions, such as themes 2 and 3, and to the proposals relating to family planning, children in difficult circumstances, programmes against AIDS and population policies. The title of theme 4 should be amended to read "Central and Eastern Europe", in accordance with established practice.

28. Mr. SCOULAR (United Kingdom) said that the provisional list of themes, with the additions suggested, would perhaps justify a separate meeting of experts. The task of the members of the Executive Board was to study the agenda and budget in the context of UNICEF's work as a whole, whereas the themes in question were more the province of experts. A meeting held prior to the Executive Board session, which would submit its results to the Board, might offer a good solution.

29. Mr. FERNANDEZ (Liberia) said that his delegation supported the proposals relating to children in difficult circumstances and emergency operations. In view of the large number of proposals, the secretariat should prepare a new list in which related themes were combined. Each delegation could then indicate its own order of priorities, and the questions which could not be taken up would be debated at the next informal meetings, to be held after the session. Holding a meeting

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before the session, as proposed by the representative of the United Kingdom, would cause difficulties for some delegations. If two or three additional days of meetings would suffice to debate all the themes, consideration could be given to the possibility of holding meetings at the weekend.

30. Mr. GNODTKE (Germany) said that his delegation would have difficulty in agreeing to the holding of meetings at the weekend and that the best solution would be to use the two weeks available in the most rational way possible.

31. Mr. MAJOOR (Netherlands) said that his proposal did not involve the holding of expert meetings before the session, but meetings of representatives present in New York. Themes such as external relations or emergency operations were familiar to members of delegations in New York and it would be useful to debate them at one or two meetings to be held before the session. The result of such an exchange of information could then be transmitted to participants at the Executive Board session.

32. Miss COURSON (France) said that, given the interest of the themes contained in the provisional list and of the additional themes proposed, it was regrettable that those questions were not dealt with in the context of the Executive Board's regular work, with interpretation services which would enable all delegations to participate on an equal footing. The regular work of the Executive Board should not be delayed by an excessive number of informal meetings. A similar situation arose in the working lunches which were generally organized at UNICEF House, and which amounted to informal meetings of the Executive Board. Such meetings should be formal and be provided with interpretation services.

33. Mr. CANTINI (Italy) said that further thought should be given to the proposals relating to informal meetings, such as those held at UNICEF House, at which specific questions of interest to many delegations were considered. A list could be prepared of priority themes to be considered at informal meetings, while other themes would be dealt with at other informal meetings to be held subsequently.

34. Mr. MAHMOOD (Pakistan) said that his delegation supported the proposal put forward by the delegation of Liberia that a list of priorities among themes for informal meetings should be established. Some of the themes proposed could, of course, be combined into a single theme.

35. Mr. GRANT (Executive Director, UNICEF) said that the secretariat welcomed the interest displayed in the proposed themes. Executive Board sessions provided an ideal framework for the exchange of views on those themes by virtue of the attendance of a number of officials from field offices, who were not normally present in New York, and who could contribute their outstanding experience. Delegations from the various countries were also present, which made it possible for there to be an effective exchange of ideas among officials from every continent. It would be possible to schedule two meetings each morning, thus enabling 18 meetings to be held over the nine days programmed. However experience

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indicated that when two parallel meetings were held, one of them, in practice, attracted much greater interest and few people attended the other. As the United States delegation had proposed, a list of possible themes could be circulated to missions of Member States, so that they could indicate the degree of interest which each theme had for them. On the basis of those views the secretariat could then determine whether it would suffice to schedule a single meeting each morning or whether there was sufficient interest to justify the holding, on various mornings, of two parallel meetings. Selection of the themes would, of course, be done in consultation with the Bureau. The aim would be for such deliberations to precede the Board's debate on the theme in question, and, if it was decided to hold two meetings in parallel, the secretariat would attempt to order the themes so that they did not inevitably attract the interest of the same individuals. The objectives which the Board had proposed for the decade represented a challenge which was probably greater than that faced by other agencies. Accordingly, it was to be hoped that the proposed themes would arouse considerable interest; the possibility could be explored of continuing to hold informal meetings at lunches, as well as additional meetings at which interpretation services would be available, with respect to other themes. The secretariat would do its utmost to facilitate the holding of consultations.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD FOR PROGRAMME COOPERATION: UNICEF MAURICE PATE AWARD (E/ICEF/1991/P/L.1)

36. Mr. NYI NYI (Director, Programme Division) said that in accordance with established procedure, all UNICEF field offices, National Committees for UNICEF and all Executive Board member Governments had been invited to submit nominations for the 1991 UNICEF Maurice Pate Award. The Bureau had reviewed the 12 nominations submitted, taking into account nominees' contributions and stated objectives, and had prepared a list of three nominees, from which it had selected the Child-to-Child Trust of the United Kingdom. Since the launching of the Trust in 1978 in preparation for the International Year of the Child, the concept of child-to-child assistance had spread to over 70 countries. The concept was based on three principles: firstly, with regard to primary health care, that individuals and communities must take responsibility for the betterment of their own health; secondly, faith in the power of children, as community members, to spread health messages to younger children, peers, families and communities; and, thirdly, the need for joint action between education and health workers at every level to promote health education. That concept, and practice based thereon, had spread to many countries, and it had been shown that, in that way, health education spread not only from child to child, but also from child to parent. For all those reasons, it was recommended that the 1991 UNICEF Maurice Pate Award should be granted to the Child-to-Child Trust of the United Kingdom.

37. The CHAIRMAN said that, if she heard no objection, she would take it that the Board approved the recommendation to grant the 1991 UNICEF Maurice Pate Award to the Child-to-Child Trust of the United Kingdom.

38. It was so decided.

REVISED CRITERIA FOR THE UNICEF MAURICE PATE AWARD (E/ICEF/1991/L.2)

39. Mr. NYI NYI (Director, Programme Division) said that in 1965 a fund had been established in memory of Maurice Pate, using the Nobel Peace Prize money received by UNICEF. In May 1966 the Board had approved a plan for the granting of the Maurice Pate Award, which had been made since 1967. Beginning in 1988, the Board had analysed the criteria used almost every year in making the award. The Bureau had concluded its examination of those criteria in September 1990. The recommendations formulated at that time were contained in document E/ICEF/1991/L.2, paragraph 13.

40. The CHAIRMAN said that, if she heard no objection, she would take it that the Board approved the revised criteria for the UNICEF Maurice Pate Award, contained in document E/ICEF/1991/L.2.

41. It was so decided.

OTHER MATTERS

42. Mr. FERNANDEZ (Liberia) proposed that delegations in a position to do so should comment on the introduction by the Chairman.

43. Ms. EHRENREICH (Denmark) said that the issues raised by the Chairman in her introductory statement were of great interest, in view of which delegations should be given another opportunity to state their views thereon after having consulted with their Governments.

44. Mr. MAJOOR (Netherlands) said that the request for informal consultations on the harmonization and rationalization of the planning and budgetary processes of the Executive Board had been submitted to the Executive Director in connection with decision 1990/14, concerning the future role of external relations, and not, as he had stated at the previous meeting, in connection with decision 1990/1, concerning Executive Board procedures, documentation and decision-making process. The request related, in actuality, to the two decisions, but it had been formulated in connection with decision 1990/14, since paragraph 10 thereof requested the planning of external relations and advocacy to be made an integral part of the medium-term plan process, specifying, inter alia, goals, objectives, activities, outputs, staffing and resource requirements and an evaluation plan. That supposed the existence of a system under which the medium-term plan would be considered, followed by the biennial budget, which would make it necessary to change the order in which they were taken up, which in turn would make it necessary to hold consultations. The suggestion that the question of holding such consultations should be included among the matters raised by the Chairman in her introductory statement was so that the Bureau could debate the question with the Executive Director, and not so that the Bureau could hold the consultations in question, which the Executive Director had been asked to undertake. With regard to the matters raised by the Chairman in her introduction, it seemed, with the adoption of decision 1990/1, that it would not be necessary to change the working methods of the Executive Board again for some years. The possibility of amending the Board's rules of procedure had been under discussion for some time. Nevertheless, most of

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the issues raised by the Chairman were not related to the rules of procedure, but, rather, to the Board's methods of work. In any event for those issues to be debated, delegations would need to have time to consult their Governments.

45. Miss DIEGUEZ (Mexico), recalled, in connection with what the representative of the Netherlands had just said, that in 1990 the Executive Board had discussed whether to continue with the open-structured working group which had carried out consultations on the Board's working methods. Various delegations had suggested that the working group should be discontinued and had called instead for the Bureau to continue the consultations. That was why the Bureau, through the Chairman, had brought new issues before the members of the Board in 1991.

46. Mr. SCOULAR (United Kingdom) said that, although the issues raised by the Chairman required further consideration, he could make preliminary comments. His delegation, which was in favour of documents being published only when necessary, supported the proposal that the Board's programme of work and its documents should be dealt with on a biennial basis. The question of how the efficiency of sessions of the Board might be improved had already been discussed under item 5 (b) of the provisional agenda and he had nothing further to add to the opinions he had expressed then. As to reinforcing the Bureau, it appeared to be the right size but the question as to whether its mandate to examine procedures should be made permanent needed clarification. Finally, with regard to the extension of the Chairman's term of office to two years, there were many arguments in favour of the idea of the same chairman being responsible for a budget and a medium-term plan.

47. The CHAIRMAN said that it was obvious that representatives could not take a position on the issues raised before they had consulted their Governments. For its part, the Bureau would have to make some suggestions. It would, in any case, be meeting on 6 February in order to try to clarify complex issues such as those relating to the rules of procedure.

48. Mr. MAJOOR (Netherlands) pointed out that during the Board's previous session its working procedures had been examined and discussed in great detail and decision 1990/1, a very thorough going decision, which it would be difficult to improve upon, had been adopted; he asked what was to be the basis for the consultations and whether they would concern the Board's future functions and procedures or the rules of procedure.

49. Mr. WILLIAMS (Secretary of the Executive Board) said that at the last session of the Executive Board the need to define the Bureau's own functions and working procedures had been raised. That issue was raised under item (e) of the points listed in the Chairman's introductory statement. As to the question of whether or not the changes which were to be discussed would have implications for the rules of procedure, the answer in some cases was yes and in others no. It was not easy to be precise when there were so many questions which had still to be clarified. When the Bureau met on 6 February it would be able to consider many of the questions raised during the meeting in progress and could ask the secretariat to prepare a document for consideration in April or at whatever time the Bureau and the Executive Board considered appropriate.

50. Miss DIEGUEZ (Mexico) expressed her initial reactions to the issues raised by the Chairman in her introductory statement. With regard to item (b), her delegation considered that the work of the Executive Board should be dealt with on a biennial basis in order to avoid unnecessary documentation as far as was possible and information should be provided in the Executive Director's report. With regard to item (d), there was no need to establish new mechanisms as the procedure by which informal consultations were carried out through the course of the year was quite adequate. Concerning item (e), what was called for was not so much the reinforcement of the role of the Bureau as the definition of that role. In fact there was no specific document available which set out the functions of the Bureau. The Secretary of the Executive Board could act as rapporteur and it was very important that there should be a summary record of the work of the Bureau to serve as a reference document. It would be extremely helpful if the mandate to examine procedures were made permanent, given that the Bureau was the body best able to advise the Executive Board as to how to improve its procedures. The number of members of the Bureau should be regarded as sufficient. It would be very appropriate for UNICEF to adopt the practice of rotating the chairmanship according to the principle of equitable geographical distribution applied by all the organizations of the United Nations system. It would also be useful to have the Bureau's mandate extended to two years, since under the present arrangements the members of the Bureau had to be replaced just when they had acquired a fuller understanding of the matters they were required to deal with.

51. Miss COURSON (France) agreed with the opinion expressed by other delegations concerning the importance of the issues raised by the Chairman in her introductory statement and the need for representatives to consult with their Governments with regard to those issues. It would be helpful if the secretariat could prepare a document or a note containing some guidelines or suggestions which would assist Governments in adopting a position on the different issues.

52. Ms. EHRENREICH (Denmark), referring to item (d) on the list of issues raised by the Chairman, pointed out for the Bureau's attention that her delegation was not in favour of setting up a mechanism for in-depth consultations on procedural questions, but would prefer to have one which would carry out consultations on questions relating to programmes.

53. Mr. KRAMER (Canada) said that the issues raised by the Chairman in her introductory statement would require in-depth consideration by delegations. To assist them in their deliberations the secretariat could perhaps, as the representative of France had just suggested, provide them with a short explanatory document concerning the issues to be discussed. Informal consultations could then take place between the members of the Bureau and the members of the Executive Board during the period up to April 1991.

54. Mr. MAJOOR (Netherlands) said that although all the questions relating to the improvement of the Board's working methods were very important some had already been discussed the previous year, and he doubted whether it was likely that much progress would have been made on the subject within the space of a few months. For example, agreement had already been reached with regard to dealing with certain

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aspects of the Executive Board's programme of work and its documents on a biennial basis and similarly with regard to the issue raised under item (c), so that there was little sense in discussing those matters again. On the other hand, the first item, concerning changes to the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council, had not so far been dealt with. It was a complex issue and the Netherlands delegation preferred not to discuss it at that particular time. Likewise the issue of the Bureau, its term of office and rotation, had not been studied; that was a subject which should be tackled.

55. Mr. FERNANDEZ (Liberia) said that the Bureau could also deal with item (g) which would not take up much time. A recommendation was in preparation which would avoid the need for joint committees to hold an additional session, as was liable to occur with the CMPS, which was going to have to meet again. That situation might have been avoided if there had been two additional alternate members. With regard to item (e), it was a question not of giving the Bureau new functions but rather of formalizing many of the practices which had become established with time.

56. Ms. MEHTA (India) agreed with what had been said by the delegate of the Netherlands with regard to items (a), (b) and (c). However items (e) and (f) were issues of substance which it was not appropriate to deal with at the Board's organizational session. The Bureau should limit itself to determining the issues and bringing them to the attention of the Board at the next session.

57. The CHAIRMAN thanked delegations for their comments and declared the session closed.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.